

VZCZCXRO2321
OO RUEHAST RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHBI #0554/01 3350838
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 300838Z NOV 08
FM AMCONSUL MUMBAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6765
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 8003
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA IMMEDIATE 1744
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI IMMEDIATE 1949
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI IMMEDIATE 1927
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MUMBAI 000554

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DS/ER/CC
DS FRONT OFFICE
DS/IP/SCA
DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: MUMBAI TERRORIST ATTACKS, SITREP #9: RETURN TO NORMALCY
CONTINUES AFTER INDIAN TRAGEDY

REF: Mumbai 553 and previous

MUMBAI 00000554 001.2 OF 003

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As the tragedy sinks in, Mumbai's residents are coming to terms with their grief for those lost in the attacks, and beginning to return to the normal lives. The media extensively covered the funerals of prominent police officials, actors, and businesspeople who were killed in the attacks. Mumbaikars are sharing their personal stories of escape or tragedy, and expressing their anger at local and national political leaders for failing to prevent these attacks. It is expected that those schools and businesses that closed during the attacks will re-open on Monday, and public transportation will run as usual. The Consulate will begin to draw down 24/7 staffing as consular cases are closed, and the criminal investigations begin. End Summary.

Siege Sites Turn to Crime Scenes

¶2. (SBU) The police and National Security Guard (NSG) forces continue to clear the Taj Palace Hotel of bodies and unexploded ammunition. RSO and Legatt teams have not been allowed access to the hotel, and do not expect to be granted access today by local authorities. The Embassy is pursuing access and law enforcement cooperation requests in New Delhi. The police have also not confirmed how many people were killed in the Taj, though some media reports indicate that 99 bodies were found there. In any case, it is expected that the death toll - variously reported between 173 and 195 - will rise.

¶3. (U) Oberoi hotel owner and chairman PRS Oberoi addressed Indian media on the evening of November 29, saying all bodies had been removed from the Oberoi and Trident hotels, but he was

not able to confirm that the Oberoi had been completely sanitized by Indian security forces. Echoing the comments of numerous Indians, he criticized the lack of security which led to the attack. He also stressed the need for better security at hotels, citing the Marriott bombing in Islamabad. Oberoi would not speculate when his hotels would reopen.

Mumbai Shows Signs of Normalcy

14. (U) As the tragedy sinks in, Mumbai's residents are coming to terms with their grief for those lost in the attacks, and beginning to return to the normal lives. A makeshift memorial is growing at the Taj, with candles, pictures of lost friends and family members, and religious symbols. Focus in the media has switched from breathless minute-by-minute reporting to stories of heroes, victims, and hairy escapes. TV stations are reporting Leopold's Cafi, site of one of the first attacks, will reopen for business today. The cafi reportedly has hung pictures over the bullet holes, has new tables and chairs, and has chefs ready to go. In his editorial "I can't wait to check back in," Shekhar Gupta, Indian's Express Editor-in-Chief, waxes eloquent about his "second home" the Bombay Oberoi, predicting that both the owners will "fix and reopen their crown jewels sooner than anyone imagines."

15. (SBU) The press also covered extensively the funerals of slain Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) Chief Hemant Karkare and other police officers who were killed on the first

MUMBAI 00000554 002.2 OF 003

night of the attack. Senior state politicians and police officers attended these funerals. The NSG forces and military commandos were praised for their role in eliminating the terrorists. So far, no politician or party has been successful in gaining political mileage out of the attacks. The statements of local politicians - such as the remark by Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil, that "Such small incidents happen in big cities - have largely been ridiculed, or ignored.

16. (U) Ambassador Mulford addressed the press in New Delhi following his meeting with Minister of External Affairs Mukherjee on the afternoon of Saturday, November 29. His comments have been widely covered in the TV and print press. He shared condolences with the people of India on behalf of President Bush and the people of the United States and offered U.S. assistance in the aftermath of the attacks. He took a single question, predictably about the possibility of FBI assistance, in answer to which the Ambassador reiterated the offer of full U.S. cooperation. The American School of Bombay is scheduled to re-open Monday, as are all other schools in the city. DS is meeting with school administrators and teachers today.

Consular Operations Continue, But Consulate Will Draw Down Operations

17. (SBU) The focus of consular operations remains the provision of American Citizens Services to casualties and their families. Consular staff notified the next of kin of Aryeh Teitelbaum and

Rabbi Holtzberg and are working closely to effect repatriation of remains of all six confirmed victims. Consular is also helping victims retrieve their luggage from the Oberoi Hotel and will do the same once the Taj is accessible. With the siege of Mumbai over, Consulate General Mumbai will begin returning to normal operations. The nonimmigrant visa section will remain closed on Monday, December 1 but will still process immigrant visas. Consular TDY help from New Delhi and the Consulates will remain through Wednesday to assist with routine section activities. We will reduce our overnight staffing in all sections beginning Sunday night. Post will remain focused on the aftermath of the terrorist attack and its implications for Mumbai and India.

Comment: Mumbaikars Ask: Will Anything Change, This Time?

¶8. (SBU) As the financial capital of India, Mumbai has always been a tempting target for terrorists, criminals, and communalists. After the demolition of Ayodhya's Babri Masjid in 1992, Mumbai was the scene of some of the country's worst communal riots: over 900 people were killed in violence in December 1992 and January 1993 before the army was finally called in by the central government. On March 12, 1993, terrorists detonated 11 bombs at key locations in Mumbai, killing 250 people and injuring over 700. Indian authorities believe that Mumbai gangster Dawood Ibrahim planned these blasts to avenge the deaths of Muslims in the riots, as well as the destruction of the Babri Masjid. Sadly, communal violence is a regular occurrence in India; while most incidents end quickly with few casualties, opportunistic politicians, politicized police, and street-level anger can turn a small conflict into a

MUMBAI 00000554 003.2 OF 003

mass conflagration, such as in the violence that broke out in New Delhi in 1984, Mumbai in 1992-93, and Gujarat in 2002. Its victims are predominately the poor and middle classes who live in close quarters with members of other communities.

¶9. (SBU) The terrorist attacks in Mumbai are an attack against India itself, and not any particular community. The terrorists have also brought a lethal reality to India's wealthy and elite by attacking them in their exclusive habitats. In expressing their grief and anger, Mumbai's residents have grasped this, and are urging politicians to turn this tragedy into an opportunity to reform and strengthen India's security apparatus at all levels. In the papers, and on TV shows, many have argued that the resilience and pragmatism of Mumbai's residents will allow the city to return to normal quickly, as has happened after previous bouts of violence. With the blame passing to elements in Pakistan, the calls for Indian unity also resonate. The Asian Age editorializes, "If this is our 9/11, let's fight it like the U.S." calling this a moment for India "to fight the menace of terrorism unitedly as one nation, with all elements of the State and civil society acting in cohesion."

¶10. (SBU) A louder cohort, however, is arguing that Indians should not continue to allow politicians to count on their complacency and fatalism, and that they should be held responsible for their failures. Vir Sanghvi writes in the Hindustan Times, "In our view, politicians had failed Bombay [in 1992-93]. And it was only a matter of time before they failed India. Well, that time has come~. The authorities reacted to this attack exactly they had reacted to all the previous ones: with astonishment and ineptitude." Even business leaders - normally reluctant to criticize the politicians and bureaucrats who control the fortunes of their companies - have spoken out in

disappointment and disgust about their political leadership. Before the attacks, Mumbaikars considered the city, and the state of Maharashtra, to be rudderless, and its leaders inept and apathetic. Their case will only be amplified in the coming weeks. End Comment.
FOLMSBEE